/114/

121 I shall describe to you in the following some aspects of the social structure of the same Indian tribe whose conceptions about the soul Herr Dr. Zerries has just discussed. The title, "Sociology," is too presumptuous, insofar as today I intend to deal with only the larger social units and thus touch upon only a small sector of the sociological field. I shall be able to present to you only raw expedition-material; the comparative arrangement of these data in South American cultural history will be the work of the next few months.

101 131 The Waika /Waica/ inhabit the upper Orinoco river region in southern Venezuela; their area of habitation, however, is not limited by the Sierra Parima, in which the Orinoco rises and which forms the mountain border with Brazil, but rather extends into Brazilian soil far beyond this mountain chain, about to the middle of the northern tributaries of the Rio Negro and Rio Branco. [161] The Sierra Parima therefore is more the backbone of the living space of this Indian group, which, according to the best estimates, contains about fifty thousand persons and an area of about half 137 the size of West Germany. According to external appearances, [132] this region is counted as tropical rain forest; seasonal differences are only slight and are practically without influence on the life 101 and culture of the people. The critical cultural importance of the 179 forest lies in its isolating effect: between the habitation area of [137] the Waika and the first mixed settlement there extends an almost [487] uninhabited forest-belt several hundred kilometers wide, and since there is very little river traffic and as other means of transportation there are only onerously traversable Indian paths, the culture of the Waika has been able to remain almost completely pure. Only a [797] few material things from our world have as yet found their way to them: a few machetes and axes, a few matches and fishhooks, which an American mission working from 1947 to 1955 under very difficult conditions and we ourselves brought along; since the Waika do not maintain any contacts of their own downriver, however, the barely begun acculturation process does not go on /115/ by itself, but ebbs away the moment the visiting whites leave Waika country.

Guahibo SC14
Yabarana SS22
Panare SS21
Sanema
Saliva SS15
Makiritare SS20

/11 cont./

All these basins, without exception, pour their great volumes of water into the Orinoco, which, like a gigantic arc, runs across the north of the Escudo de Guayana, thus enclosing all the native tribes studied here and marking the farthermost boundary and end of their primitive world (cf. ethnic map /see p. 5 /). /12/ /Map appears here./

/13/ It is interesting to point out that the extensive fluvial network of the Orinoco-Ventuari zone does not serve the majority of the tribes as a means of communication or as an outstanding source of food. The Panare of the basin of the Cuchivero do not travel by river, and on the Cuchivero we found only one dugout /bongo/, which was used solely for crossing the river. In general the curiara /dugout canoe/ seems to be a foreign element in Panare culture, introduced recently by the Creoles. Nor did the Yabarana of the basin of the Ventuari use the curiara, and they recently learned from their neighbors, the Makiritare, the art of making them. For the Sanemá the river represents an obstacle rather than a means of communication, and they use rafts in order to cross it. At the present time, only the groups who live in symbiosis with the Makiritare make curiaras, but there is not the slightest doubt that this industry was adopted recently. The Sanemá spend less time at fishing than do the Panare, Yabarana, and Guahibo, since the latter too are among those Indians oriented toward the land, with its roads, rather than toward the rivers and navigation. The only real voyagers of the Orinoco-Ventuari zone are the Piaroa and the Makiritare, and the fame of the latter exceeds that of the former.

Culturally, the Makiritare belong to a Neo-Indian level, as do their cousins of the same linguistic affiliation, the Panare and the Yabarana. It is interesting, however, to call attention to the fact that to speak of Caribe /Carib/ Indians is not the same eo ipso as speaking of voyaging Indians. There are Neo-Indians who are ignorant of the curiara and who developed agriculture, not in a Meso-Indian culture (of fishermen and voyagers), but basically on top of a Paleo-Indian culture (of hunters). Meso-Indian cultures, such as that of the Warao, for example, and possibly that of the Piaroa, represent a specialization of the Paleo-American who was

[Text continues on P. 4]

6: Vinci T-5 (1950) 1959 SQ18 Yanoama SQ18
Sanema

123 to Las Trinqueras he would buy him red cloth, flowered dresses for his womenfolk, and that supreme Indian luxury, powder and shot for the gun, and so on.

Pancho listened with a smile, every now and then giving a little scornful laugh, which might have meant rich contentment or just plain scepticism. He winked at us—mere neutral observers—with his horribly burnt eye.

Two days later a crew was ready. Pancho himself was not going, but our three travellers were to leave in two big canoes. In twenty days they would reach Las Trinqueras and from that point the rubber planters' launch would take them on to Ciudad Bolivar. We gave them a letter for the pilots of the air charter company with whom we had an agreement. They had failed us badly. We had made it clear to the plane when it had paid us its last visit, by putting a big notice on the strip, that we had one passenger to be taken off. Jean couldn't face the thought of the journey back by water. But they had not come for her, so she stayed with us. We told them that we would be expecting a plane on the Kirisochi field on either the fourteenth, fifteenth, or sixteenth of April.

After the three had gone, a vast silence seemed to settle on the forest, touching us as well. It was sad to have said good-bye to friends like Momi and Giovanni, but by way of compensation we now had a much better balanced party. I felt free, gloriously free. The field was mine now. I could push ahead with our work to the limit, with no ethical question marks bothering me, and no remorse.

We went off with the Shirians to pay a visit to Pulipuli and to look up a [487] valuable fellow named Cesare. The Valley of the Moon can also be entered by way of the Canaracuni, along another valley which runs down from the same [362] heights and is linked with the Canaracuni by a maze of paths. On every side there [361] are Shirian huts, tiny dilapidated affairs, each in a little clearing threatened by the advance of the forest.

Cesare was not at home. In his stead we found a crowd of old acquaintances, one of them being an old Indian of great dignity whom we had nicknamed 'The Senator'. He had come to Kirisochi on our arrival there, he had been present while we were building our hut, and never had he done a hand's turn. He would watch others at work with a fine air of detachment which was really [413] remarkable. He was truly sufficient unto himself. Most of the time he spent stretched out in a hammock—a very small one made of liana—with his feet higher than his head. Periodically he scratched his back with a stick prepared and reserved for just that purpose. One of those ivory back-scratchers with a

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Captured by the Samatari

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WE HAD been trudging up and down the thirty-two hills for two days now, and we could hardly believe there could be so many in these parts, though Hashimo had been very definite on the point. But every time we asked him how many were left we got the same reply: without a word, he gave a grin that was half bored, half mischievous, and his characteristic gesture with all its morphological variations. The total indicated, allowing for the number of hills we had already climbed (and we kept a strict account) always came to thirty-two.

Without the old man's unerring instinct it would have been impossible to find the track the Samatari had once made use of in the course of their wars. It was covered with fallen trees, bamboo thickets had grown over it and rivulets and swampy patches obscured it since it had been abandoned, but he smelt it out. He climbed straight uphill where the trees were tallest and straightest, wound his way around and between the impacted trunks of the banyans, crossed valleys dense with undergrowth, wielding his machete with a will in great sweeps to right and left. He went up mountain streams and down them, losing them and finding them again at some point further on, beyond a clump of thick roots or on the other side of a thorny bush of Iriartea—and woe betide the unwary traveller who grabbed at this to help him up the slope!

Climbing a wooded hill is hard work and there is no compensation such as there is in open high country where one can see the landscape unfolding as one climbs. In front of us there was nothing but a mass of trees in the shape of a tilted, narrowing triangle, completely dark in its midst with slips of a brilliant sky to be seen towards the edges. Up on the summit, the triangle would disappear and the slips of sky would widen to form a bright horizon all around, as a kind of prelude to the blue bedazzlement of the whole sky. But no such heavens opened up overhead. It was just a case of going down again into the

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Sanema

next valley, along spurs which inexplicably began to rise again between streams rushing madly in all directions, now away from us, now towards us, now to one side, now to the other, as if we had lost our sense of balance and were spinning round and round.

Game was extremely scarce and the gun which Luis Antonio had brought went, alas, unused. This was a serious state of affairs: we had nothing in the way of rations but a little salt and were relying on hunting and finding fruit. Fishing in these tiny rushing streams was not likely to yield much. We had hardly anything with us except the gun, a hundred cartridges, our hammocks for the night and a few medical supplies—not so much for ourselves as for any Indians we met with, for experience had taught us that even the most ferocious of them would respond in friendly fashion and be grateful if we cured the sick. So there we were with our few rags of clothes, carrying our mystic handful of salt, humbly and nakedly challenging the great world of the wilds—those thirty-two hills, inhabited perhaps by strange creatures and criss-crossed with clear streams running in all directions. And out of the very humility of our position in the face of such tremendous odds we drew our hopes for the success of our undertaking, as if we were instinctively conscious of a fundamental justice in the life of the forest, which would not deny us its bounty.

Some touch of enchantment, as in a legend, there must have been about us: the animals themselves seemed sensitive to it—those few at least who roamed these hills. The first morning we woke among the trees—we had camped on the bank of a sizeable stream which according to Hashimo flowed into the Uagna—I looked out of our rough shelter to see a lead-grey puma start silently by the water. The creature had the same contented look in his eyes as a dog has when going for a walk. I felt no alarm. I just watched quietly, with no thought of grabbing my gun or calling the others. After giving me a long, brotherly, understanding look, the puma crossed a little clear space and went off slowly, as he had come, through the cane-brake.

So-called fierce wild animals see in man a dangerous competitor and they don't want anything to do with him. We often chanced to strike a region across which there never had been any paths or trails. The first night as we settled down to sleep we could hear the screaming of wildcats, the roar of jaguars and the odd cry of the puma which sounds something like a night-bird's call. But by the next day all sound from the wild beasts had ceased. The scent of man had driven them away.

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Sanema

CAPTURED BY THE SAMATARI

Among the Indians generally, and the northern Guayca tribes, there is a curious method of keeping wild animals at a distance which is based on this knowledge. They search round the streams for traces of the path the animals use when they go to drink. Then they scatter it with human excrement. If one of the creatures comes back that way, he will suddenly go bounding off across the width of the valley to seek refuge in the rocky heart of the mountain, such is his terror of the very traces of man.

Before we reached one table-topped hill which we had glimpsed from the last high point, Uarema killed an agouti. We ate it straight away, with a few palm hearts from San Paulo palm trees which Sempronio and Solituan—the youngest and oldest members of our expedition—gathered as we went along, and carried with them like bunches of flowers. We camped on the sandstone heights, where the vegetation had thinned out and was soft and mossy, with great clusters of Spanish moss, drenched with water, clinging to the tree-trunks, orchids growing on the ground and curtains of lichen hanging from the trees instead of the lianas found at lower levels.

And with the change of vegetation at this altitude, there was a change of atmosphere also. From the warm, heavy air of the plain, where one could feel a lush exuberance of life swelling the sap of every plant and setting a myriad little animals in motion, you passed to a region of cold silence, only broken at regular intervals by the lugubrious chant of the bell-bird, a bird with an astoundingly long white tail which, from concealment among the bushes, gives a call of long, mournful, metallic ring.

After our high spirits of the first day out, which the luxuriant life of the forest had sent even higher, now, on the heights, we were invaded by a sort of melancholy acceptance of these cool solitudes and their touch of death. We wanted to drop down again, to camp in some little valley where the chances of encountering animals were always greater; but the hour was very late, and we had to stay where we were for the night, on the south side. From here, as far as the eye could see, the humps of the mountains stretched out before us as we peered through the trees. They were covered with a thick dark green vegetation, absolutely uniform, and underneath it a hundred little streams drained into marshy depressions. Hashimo pointed out the hills with his usual gesture. Before we reached the Samatari, there were still eighteen more, or so we thought.

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him outside the range of the magic influence which had reduced him to such a hideous condition. But evidently they had only escaped the Samatari magic to fall straight into another, which was too much for the sick child. He died, sacrificed in a duel between two magic powers.

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The great 'provisioning-march' of the Samatari now began. We went along with them. We were prisoners, we were guests, we were tolerated visitors—a bit of everything. The main body, with the women and children, led the way along a track that was years old and had been opened up again the day before by the younger members of the tribe, who possessed the one metal weapon used by the Samatari: a piece of a knife-blade stuck into a stick and firmly bound with bark soaked in vegetable gum. What story could this scrap of steel have told when it finally reached the headwaters of the Arascoa!

[illegible] towards the south-east. It lay for the most part through the dense thickets of fruit-bearing trees, which probably harboured other sorts of foodstuffs of which we knew nothing. The main body arrived to find that the young men had already picked nuts and fruit of all kinds and made piles of them at the foot of the trees. All the women had to do was take them up.

When meat of any sort is found and killed on these occasions, a couple of youngsters stay behind with it. They sling a hammock and light a fire and watch while it is slowly smoking on the spit. When the women come up, they pull off pieces of the flesh, put them into the rough hampers they carry on their shoulders and go on with the march, their babies jogging up and down on their backs, tied there with a strap made of bark. Some, like peripatetic vestal virgins, take fire with them, in the form of glowing brands, blowing on them as they go along lest the embers should grow cold. Thus the march of the Samatari leaves a trail of nutshells, rinds, ash, and little bits of charcoal. It suggests not so much an ordinary nomadic people on the move but rather a very special tribe composed of itinerant cooks.

With evening, or strictly speaking some time before the end of the afternoon, we found ourselves in a vast clearing where all the small plants, shrubs, bushes and grass had been cut away and swept and raked aside. All round this

/468 cont./

Traveling and Transportation

487 They make almost all their trips on foot by paths and trails. Bridges are built over the largest rivers. Other rivers are waded or crossed on tree trunks.

/469/ New paths are marked by breaking branches in passing. On old roads they indicate the path or paths which have not been taken, leaving some object or a little pile of leaves at the entrance of same. A stick may be tied to an abandoned dwelling to indicate in what direction the former occupant has moved.
621 (A settlement may split up into groups when it abandons the
166 site in the area of the "conuco," and therefore this sign does not necessarily mean that the entire settlement has gone off in that direction.)

166 The Guaika /Waica/ travel frequently, but generally not
628 very far. The nearest settlement -- perhaps a day away -- is usually as far as they go. The settlement beyond this might be an enemy settlement, or at least not very friendly. Even neighboring settlements have such bad relations with one another that
628 they rarely visit among themselves. But the settlements which
574 are on friendly terms visit each other very frequently, and, when both live in the areas of the conucos, visitors come and go between them every few days.

574 The reasons for visiting are principally to see friends or to stay until their own "conuco" (which might be in a period of little production) begins to produce again.

Standards of Living

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[342] The Guaika /Waica/ consider it essential to sleep every night under a roof. Thus, they always build some sort of shelter.

[354] A fire is also essential. A Guaika will not sleep without a fire at night. He needs it to obtain heat and to protect himself from animals, and with the fire he feels safer from evil spirits.

101 175 This is also supported by meagre historical evidence bearing on the aboriginal inhabitants of this area. Several distinguished Europeans explored portions of the area under consideration and all of them were familiar with the existence of the Yąnomamö in the Orinoco headwaters. None of them, however, reported that Yąnomamö Indians were living in the Mavaca Basin. Alexander [487] Humboldt, who ascended the Casiquiare Canal in 1800, discussed the area of the Mavaca headwaters as one frequently used by Indians of the 'Portuguese Missions' as the route between the Cauabury headwaters to Esmeralda (on the Orinoco River) by way of the Mavaca River. The aromatic seeds of [489] the puchery laurel were seasonally gathered near Esmeralda and sold in Brazil (Humboldt, 1281, Vol. 5, pt. 1, pp. 308-9).

175 487 So well known was this route that Robert Schomburgk intended to follow it in 1839 to reach the Rio Negro from Esmeralda, hoping to avoid the 200 miles that the Casiquiare route would have added to his journey. He was dissuaded from doing so by the residents of Esmeralda, who, knowing both the route and the seasonal variations in the river, assured him that the trip would be impossible at that time of the year (Schomburgk, 1840 :244).

Richard Spruce ascended the Paciba River, a branch of the Casiquiare Canal that has its source near the Mavaca River, in 1854 and found the upper reaches of the river inhabited by several Aruak-speaking tribes (1908:425, 427).

The first evidence that the Yąnomamö had penetrated

λ [i.e. Shamatari expansion south of the Orinoco R. - Analyst]

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Fig. 2-1. A Yąnomamö village and plantain garden, aerial view (Tototobi River, Brazil).

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TRAILS AND TRAVEL. Trails lead out from the village in several directions. Some of them terminate in the gardens that surround the village, but a few of them continue on into the jungle and lead eventually to other villages. The unexperienced eye would not recognize them as trails, as they are hardly more than winding paths through brush, over or around logs, through streams and swamps, and up hills. The Yąnomamö take the most direct route to their destination, regardless of the terrain. A foreigner learns how to recognize a trail only after considerable experience. The most telltale signs are the numerous broken twigs at about knee height left by Yąnomamö travelers who compulsively keep their hands occupied snapping off brush and twigs as they walk. Another sign is the occasional log that is worn smooth from the tread of numerous travelers who prefer to walk along a log rather than go around it.

The most commonly used trail from Kąbawë's village leads to the two Shamatari villages, Reyaboböwei-teri and Mõnariböwei-teri, southwest of Upper Bisasi-teri. Hardly a week goes by in the dry season without a few individuals making a trip from one of these villages to Bisasi-teri or vice versa. A group of young men can make this trip in one day if they walk rapidly and leave early in the morning. Older men, women, and children must plan on a two day journey, as they walk more slowly and rest more frequently. There are a number of temporary shelters along the trail built by previous visitors, so the traveler does not have to spend much time putting one of these into repair should he decide to camp overnight.

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